

Statistics Weekly

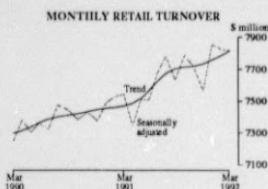
Thursday, 21 May 1992

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Retail picture improves slightly

The seasonally adjusted estimate of turnover for retail and selected service establishments fell by 0.2 per cent in March 1992 — the second consecutive monthly fall.



Despite these falls, the month to month increase in the trend estimates continues to improve slowly, with average growth of 0.3 per cent over the three months ended March. The annual growth rate (March 1992 over March 1991) was 4.6 per cent, the highest it has been since mid 1990.

Clothing and fabric stores and 'other' food stores are the only major industries showing strong growth, averaging 1.1 and 1.2 per cent respectively over the last three months. Hotels, liquor stores and licensed clubs are now showing weak growth after a period of decline. The growth rate for grocers is also slow; department stores growth rate is in decline.

RETAIL AND SELECTED SERVICE INDUSTRIES TURNOVER

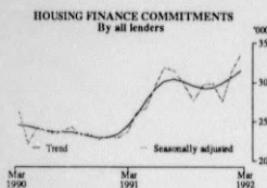
	Original value in March 1992 \$ million	Average monthly percentage change in trend estimates	
		3 months ended March 1992	12 months ended March 1992
Grocers, confectioners, tobacconists	2,256	0.3	0.4
Butchers	184	0.8	0.0
Other food stores	568	1.2	1.0
Total food group	3,008	0.4	0.5
Hotels, liquor stores, licensed clubs	938	0.1	-0.3
Department and general stores	695	-0.2	0.4
Clothing and fabrics stores	502	1.1	0.6
Electrical stores	408	1.2	0.2
Pharmacies	316	0.5	0.6
Newsagents	287	1.0	0.8
Other industries	1,345	n.a.	n.a.
All industries	7,499	0.3	0.4

The value of turnover for retail and selected service industries in constant price seasonally adjusted terms for March quarter 1992 rose by 1.1 per cent from December quarter 1991. In the past year (March quarter 1992 over March quarter 1991) turnover increased by 2.1 per cent.

RETAIL AND SELECTED SERVICE INDUSTRIES TURNOVER At average 1984-85 prices, seasonally adjusted

Quarter	\$ million	Percentage change	
		From previous quarter	From corresponding quarter of previous year
June 1991	15,048	-1.1	-2.2
September 1991	15,474	2.8	0.1
December 1991	15,356	-0.8	1.0
March 1992	15,531	1.1	2.1

Dwellings financed highest in four years



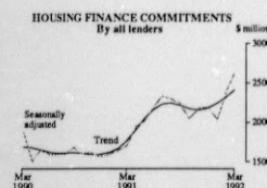
Finance was committed to individuals for 33,578 dwelling units for owner occupation in March 1992 after seasonal adjustment. This was up 7.2 per cent on February 1992 and 41.4 per cent on March last year and was the highest number of dwellings financed in a month since July 1988.

For the second successive month all three purpose of loan categories recorded increases in March. The number of commitments for the construction of dwellings was up 10.4 per cent; the purchase of newly erected dwellings up 15.5 per cent; and the purchase of established dwellings up 5.8 per cent on February 1992.

As can be seen from the above chart, provisional trend estimates for March indicate that after falling in September, October and November 1991, the number of dwelling units financed has been rising each month since December 1991.

HOUSING FINANCE COMMITMENTS, MARCH 1992
Seasonally adjusted

Purpose of commitment	Number of dwellings	Percentage change from	
		Previous month	Corresponding month of previous year
Construction of dwellings	6,567	10.4	32.2
Purchase of newly erected dwellings	1,984	15.5	44.0
Purchase of established dwellings	25,027	5.8	43.8
<i>Total</i>	33,578	7.2	41.4



The seasonally adjusted value of housing finance for individuals was \$2,622.3 million. This was 9.9 per cent higher than in February and 53.6 per cent higher than in March 1991.

For further information, order the publication *Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Australia* (5609.0), or contact Mark Dennis on (06) 252 7129 or Harry Wilson on (06) 252 6170.

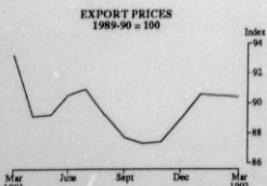
Export prices: another slight fall

Export prices fell by just 0.1 percent between February and March 1992, the second month in a row that export prices have fallen by this amount.

Approximately half of the items in the index recorded price decreases in March. The largest price falls were for gold, coal and coke, and metal ores.

These decreases were partly offset by price increases for approximately 40 per cent of the index items. The only significant increases recorded were for cereals, wool and aluminium.

On an annual basis, export prices fell by 3.0 per cent between March 1991 and March 1992.



The wide range of price changes for different commodities is shown below.

EXPORT PRICES, MARCH 1992
Percentage change

Commodity	From previous month	From corresponding month of previous year
Vegetable products	2.0	25.7
Live animals and animal products	1.1	4.9
Prepared food stuffs	0.7	2.1
Motor vehicles, aircraft and vessels	0.7	1.0
Mineral products	-1.0	-3.3
Machinery and appliances	-0.8	-3.6
Gold, diamonds and coin	-2.9	-4.1
Products of chemicals or allied industries	-2.1	-9.8
Base metals	1.3	-11.5
Wool and cotton fibres	1.8	-14.6
All exports	-0.1	-3.0

For further information, order the publication Export Price Index, Australia (6405.0), or contact Peter Cordy on (06) 252 5541.

New ABS support for Earth Studies — a 'natural' resource for schools

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has produced and published a comprehensive statistical resource book for students in a number of fields related to the environment.

The 285-page publication *Striking a Balance! Australia's Development and Conservation* is designed for upper secondary school studies, but contains much information of interest to a general reader.

The material collected in the book is especially relevant to studies in geography, earth sciences, environmental studies, economics, politics, business studies and mathematics.

The publication provides a useful starting point for informed debate on topical issues to do with the economy and the environment. The contents include:

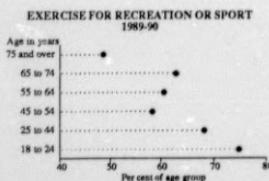
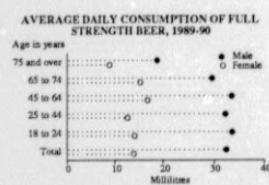
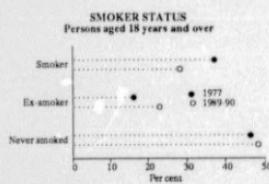
- Research and data analysis — sources of data for school research, collecting data, presenting and interpreting data, regional geographic studies, suggested activities with data;
- Environment and settlement — landforms, climate, natural resources, agricultural land use;
- Population and social indicators — natural increase, population movement and geographic distribution, patterns of work;
- Economics and the environment — ecologically sustainable development, industry and the Australian economy, mineral resource and energy use, greenhouse and ozone layer issues, technology and the environment; and

- Environmental statistics — land use and management, forests, biological diversity, water resources, pollution, national parks, recycling and waste disposal.

At the end of May the ABS will release *Australia's Environment: Issues and Facts* (4140.0) in time for World Environment Day on 5 June 1992.

For further information, order the publication *Striking a Balance! Australia's Development and Conservation* (1314.0), or contact John Moody on (03) 615 7351.

How we put our health at risk



Some 7 per cent of adults in Australia smoke, drink alcohol and do no exercise according to results of the 1989-90 National Health Survey. The survey found that 28 per cent of adults smoke, 62 per cent had drunk alcohol in the week prior to the survey and 36 per cent had done no exercise for sport or recreation in the previous two weeks. At the same time the survey found that 36 per cent of adults are overweight or obese.

The proportion of people who smoke is highest in the 18 to 24 year age group (36%) and decreases in older age groups, particularly among females. Comparison with results of a survey conducted in 1977 show that the proportion of smokers has declined from 37 per cent, with most of the decline accounted for by people who had given up smoking rather than a fall in the number taking it up. Smokers are more likely to drink alcohol than non-smokers and are less likely to exercise.

Comparison with results of the 1977 survey also shows that the proportion of males aged 18 years or more who drank alcohol in the previous week had fallen, but that of females had risen across all age groups. Proportionately more people drank wine but fewer drank beer. In 1989-90 male drinkers had an average daily consumption of alcohol more than double that of females (31mls and 13mls respectively).

The proportion of people who exercised is highest in the 18 to 24 year age group (75%), but almost half of the population over 75 years of age reported exercising. Males are more likely to undertake vigorous exercise than females, with the majority of females favouring walking for exercise.

SELECTED HEALTH RISK FACTORS, 1989-90 Per cent of population

	Age group in years				
	18 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 and over	Total
Smoker	36	32	26	13	28
Drank alcohol	63	68	62	47	62
No exercise	25	34	41	42	36
Overweight/obese	20	35	48	39	36

For further information, order the publication *Health Risk Factors, Australia* (4380.0). Alternatively, separate publications from the 4380.0 package may be ordered as follows: Alcohol Consumption (4381.0), Smoking (4382.0), Exercise (4383.0) and Accidents (4384.0), or contact Brian Richings on (06) 252 5786.

Inquiries

The ABS supplies a wide range of statistical information:

- through its bookshops
- by mail order (including subscription)
- by facsimile
- electronically.

To order any of the publications that appear in *Statistics Weekly* or to inquire about the statistics and services available from the ABS, contact Information Services at any of the offices listed below. An Information Consultancy Service in each office provides assistance of a more extensive or complex nature.

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ABS State Offices

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Qld (07) 222 6351
WA (09) 323 5140
SA (08) 237 7100
Tas. (002) 20 5800
NT (089) 432 111

Award rates of pay in brief ...

Over the 12 months to March 1992, the weekly award rates of pay indexes for full-time adult male and full-time adult female employees both rose by 2.8 per cent.

The largest movements over the period for full-time adult males occurred in the wholesale and retail trade industry (4.4%) and in the recreation, personal and other services industry (3.5%). For full-time adult females the largest movements occurred in the wholesale and retail trade industry (3.8%), in the manufacturing industry and in the recreation, personal and other services industry (both 3.3%).

Source: Award Rates of Pay Indexes, Australia, March 1992 (6312.0).

All the week's releases: 13 to 19 May

General

Publications Advice, 15 May 1992 (1105.0; free)
Publications Advice, 19 May 1992 (1105.0; free)
Statistics Weekly, 14 May 1992 (1318.0; \$4.20)
Regional Statistics, NSW, 1992 (1304.1; \$18.00)
Queensland Pocket Year Book, 1992 (1302.3; \$8.00)

Social statistics

National Health Survey: Health Risk Factors, 1989-90 (4380.0; \$100.00) — new issue
National Health Survey: Alcohol Consumption, 1989-90 (4381.0; \$5.00) — new issue
National Health Survey: Smoking, 1989-90 (4382.0; \$5.00) — new issue
National Health Survey: Exercise, 1989-90 (4383.0; \$5.00) — new issue
National Health Survey: Accidents, 1989-90 (4384.0; \$5.00) — new issue
Law and Order, Qld, 1990-91, Summary (4501.3; \$5.00)

National accounts, finance and foreign trade

Australian National Accounts: National Income and Expenditure, 1990-91 (5204.0; \$25.00)
Housing Finance for Owner Occupation, Aust., March 1992 (5609.0; \$10.50)
Lease Finance, Aust., March 1992 (5644.0; \$6.00)
Local Government Finance, NSW, 1990 (5502.1; \$21.00)

Labour statistics and prices

Award Rates of Pay Indexes, Aust., March 1992 (6312.0; \$11.00)
Export Price Index, Aust., March 1992 (6405.0; \$8.00)
The Labour Force, Vic., February 1992 (6202.2; \$14.50)

Agriculture

Agricultural Industries, Structure of Operating Units, Aust., 31 March 1991 (7102.0; \$21.00)
Livestock Products — Meat, Qld, March 1992 (7204.3; \$5.00)

Secondary industry and distribution

Retail Trade, Aust., March 1992 (8501.0; \$10.50)
Building Approvals, NSW, March 1992 (8731.1; \$10.50)
Building Approvals, NSW, December 1991 Corrigendum (8731.1; free)
Building Approvals — Private Sector, Perth Statistical Division, April 1992 (8732.5; \$5.00)
Building Approvals, Tas., March 1992 (8731.6; \$10.50)

Transport

Motor Vehicle Registrations, WA, March 1992 (9303.5; \$7.50)

Subscriptions

To subscribe to *Statistics Weekly* or any other ABS printed publication, phone the ABS Subscription Service toll-free on (08) 020608, or contact Information Services at any of the offices listed at left.

Suggestions

Any suggestions for improvement to this publication should be addressed to:

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Calendar of key releases

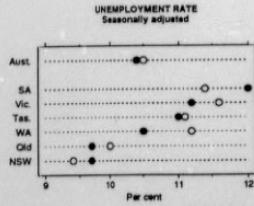
Expected releases over the fortnight to 2 June 1992

May

- [21] Private New Capital Expenditure, Australia, Actual and Expected Expenditure to June 1993, March Quarter 1992 Survey, Preliminary (5625.0; \$10.50)
- [21] Price Indexes of Articles Produced by Manufacturing Industry, Australia, March 1992 (6412.0; \$10.50)
- [22] Price Indexes of Materials Used in Manufacturing Industries, Australia, March 1992 (6411.0; \$10.50)
- [26] Manufacturing Production, Australia, April 1992, Preliminary (8301.0; \$10.50)
- [26] Registrations of New Motor Vehicles, Australia, April 1992, Preliminary (9301.0; \$10.50)
- [28] Stocks, Manufacturers' Sales March Quarter 1992 and Expected Sales to December 1992, Australia, (5629.0; \$10.50)
- [28] Company Profits, Australia, March Quarter 1992 (5651.0; \$10.50)
- [28] Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, February 1992, Preliminary (6301.0; \$10.50)
- [28] Import Price Index, Australia, March 1992 (6414.0; \$8.00)
- [29] Balance of Payments, Australia, March Quarter 1992 (5302.0; \$21.00)
- [29] Price Index of Materials Used in Building Other Than House Building, Eight Capital Cities, March 1992 (6407.0; \$10.50)
- [29] Price Index of Materials Used in House Building, Six State Capital Cities and Canberra, March 1992 (6408.0; \$8.00)

The latest ...

Changes to key State indicators — consolidated to 19 May 1992



	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
— Percentage change from same period previous year —									
New capital expenditure (Dec. qtr 91)*	-25.6	-17.7	-10.8	-3.6	1.1	-51.4	n.a.	n.a.	-17.4
Retail turnover (Mar. 92) (trend estimate)	5.3	2.6	6.6	-1.2	8.5	3.3	n.a.	8.9	4.6
New motor vehicle registrations (Mar. 92)†	11.4	32.1	29.5	1.5	26.8	10.3	36.4	-9.3	19.2
Number of dwelling unit approvals (Mar. 92)	32.7	51.7	31.1	-8.1	60.3	29.1	23.3	846.5	37.2
Value of total building work done (Dec. qtr 91)	-25.5	-25.4	4.4	-29.6	-12.9	3.4	4.3	3.4	-18.5
Employed persons (Apr. 92)‡	-0.8	-2.1	2.4	-3.3	0.9	-3.3	6.0	-2.9	-0.7
Capital city consumer price index (Mar. qtr 92)	1.2	2.1	1.7	2.6	0.9	2.1	2.1	2.6	1.7
Average weekly earnings (full-time adult ordinary time) (Nov. 91)	4.7	4.1	3.0	5.3	4.3	3.0	4.8	4.0	4.2
Population (June 91)	1.3	1.1	2.2	1.2	2.0	0.9	1.0	2.9	1.5
Room nights in licensed hotels and motels, etc. (Dec. qtr 91)	3.2	3.6	10.1	-2.6	8.3	3.6	2.8	2.9	5.1

* Seasonally adjusted except for NT and ACT. † Seasonally adjusted except for Tas., NT and ACT.

The latest ...

Key national indicators – consolidated to 19 May 1992

	Period	Latest figure available		Percentage change (a) on	
		Original	Seasonally adjusted	Previous period	Corresponding period last year
National production					
Gross domestic product (A) — 1984–85 prices	\$m	Dec. qtr 91	n.a.	64,075	0.3
Industrial activity					
New capital expenditure — current prices (e)	\$m	Dec. qtr 91	6,253	5,696	-12.6
— 1984–85 prices (e)	"	"	4,921	4,487	-11.4
Expected new capital expenditure (e)	"	Six months to June 92	11,732	n.a.	n.a.
Retail turnover — current prices	"	Mar. 92	7,499	7,815	-0.2
— 1984–85 prices	"	Mar. qtr 92	14,755	15,531	2.1
New motor vehicle registrations	no.	Mar. 92	51,233	48,862	9.3
Dwelling unit approvals	"	Mar. 92	13,409	12,707	6.9
Value of all building approvals	\$m	"	1,796	1,722	-1.6
Value of total building work done	"	Dec. qtr 91	5,977.4	5,675.6	-3.6
— current prices	"	"	3,846.5	3,652.3	-3.9
— 1984–85 prices	"	"	36,551	34,813	-0.9
Manufacturers' sales — current prices	"	Dec. qtr 91	25,418	24,215	-1.0
— 1984–85 prices	"	Six months to June 92	69,535	n.a.	-3.2
Expected manufacturers' sales	"	"	"	"	"
Labour					
Employed persons	'000	Apr. 92	7,696.4	7,672.3	-0.2
Unemployment rate †	%	"	10.6	10.4	0.1
Participation rate †	"	"	63.0	62.7	-0.3
Job vacancies	'000	Feb. 92	27.6	26.6	3.1
Average weekly overtime per employee	hours	"	1.10	1.12	5.7
Prices, profits and wages					
Consumer price index	1989–90 = 100.0	Mar. qtr 92	107.6	n.a.	0.0
Price index of materials used in manufacturing industries	1984–85 = 100.0	Feb. 92	120.9	n.a.	0.0
Price index of articles produced by manufacturing industry (e)	1988–89 = 100.0	Feb. 92	111.6	n.a.	0.0
Company profits before income tax	\$m	Sept. qtr 91	2,982	2,841	21.2
Average weekly earnings (Full-time adults; ordinary time)	\$	Nov. 91	578.80	n.a.	2.0
Interest rates (b) (monthly average)					
90-day bank bills †	% per annum	Mar. 92	7.55	n.a.	0.05
10-year Treasury bonds †	"	"	9.90	n.a.	-0.15
Balance of payments					
Exports of merchandise	\$m	Mar. 92	4,712	4,745	2.0
Imports of merchandise	"	"	4,349	4,317	3.3
Balance on merchandise trade (c)	"	"	363	428	-9.7
Balance of goods and services (c)	"	"	250	231	-8.0
Balance on current account (c)	"	"	-1,022	-938	-50.1
Terms of trade (d)	1984–85 = 100.0	Dec. qtr 91	n.a.	97.1	-2.9
Foreign investment					
Net foreign debt	\$m	31 Dec. 91	144,772	n.a.	2.7
Net foreign liabilities	"	"	194,273	n.a.	4.3
Exchange rates (monthly average)					
\$US per \$A	May 1970 = 100.0	Mar. 92	0.7588	n.a.	0.9
Trade weighted index	"	"	58.6	n.a.	4.3
Other indicators					
Population (resident at end of qtr)	million	June 91	17.3	n.a.	0.3
Overseas visitor arrivals (e)	'000	Feb. 92	238	209	1.7

(a) Based on seasonally adjusted figures when available. (b) Source: Reserve Bank of Australia. (c) For percentage changes, a minus sign indicates an increase in the deficit; no sign means a decrease in the deficit or an increase in the surplus. (d) The ratio of the price of goods and services for exports to that for imports. (e) Later figures expected to be released Thursday 21 May 1992.

NOTES: † = change is shown in terms of percentage points. n.a. = not available.
Figures have been taken from a variety of ABS publications. Copies may be obtained from Information Services (see page 6). Some of the figures shown are preliminary, some final, and some are revisions of previously published figures. Users should check the latest relevant publication or with the ABS Information Services if the status of the statistic is important.

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